ANDY JORGENSEN

A voice for the 37th Assembly District, serving Jefferson & Dane Counties

JORGENSEN TESTIMONY REGARDING AB 203

Chairman Bies, committee members... thank you for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 203 and for accepting my testimony today.

Chairman Bies, I want to especially acknowledge your cosponsorship of this legislation. I truly appreciate your willingness to work across party lines for the safety and betterment of the communities we serve. Thank you.

As you know, I am the author of AB 203. I drafted this bill in partnership with local law enforcement officers and prosecutors, and I'm very pleased to have Jefferson County Assistant District Attorney Monica Hall and several of her colleagues joining me here to testify in support of the legislation.

ADA Hall and a Jefferson County special drug agent were the first to highlight what we believe is an unintended consequence of the state's restrictions on the sale of products with pseudoephedrine.

Pseudoephedrine is a product often legally used in cold medications. You're likely familiar with the brand-name medications "Sudafed," "Actifed," and "Benadryl Allergy and Cold Relief."

But, pseudoephedrine is also used in the illegal manufacture of methamphetamine. On the street, this dangerous, highly-addictive drug is known as "meth," "crystal meth," "ice" and "speed."

Meth gives its user a "rush" or intense feeling of pleasure, but also leads to physical dependence. Chronic meth users suffer severe depression, delusions, hallucinations, and paranoia that can lead to violent and risky behavior. Eventually, meth causes heart attacks, strokes — and death.

Also of concern is the way meth is made. The "cooking" process produces toxic gas and leaves explosive chemical residue behind. Each year, people die just from making the drug.

We in Wisconsin know meth is a threat to public safety and public health.

In fact, the Legislature several years ago took action to address meth's impact on our state by limiting the availability of one of meth's main ingredients: pseudoephedrine.

At that time, lawmakers agreed to restrict the sale of legal psuedoephedrine products, like Sudafed and Actifed, to seven and a half grams in a 30-day period. That amount wouldn't be enough for a meth cooker, but it would allow someone with a cold to get the medications they need for relief.

I think because the Legislature was sensitive to the needs of the public, they wrote into that law an exception, a way for people to get around the 30-day limit. The law said that, if you got your pseudoephedrine product from a pharmacy or pharmacist, you could exceed the 30-day limit.

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I suppose that measure had good intentions, but law enforcement and prosecutors are finding that drug makers and drug dealers are benefiting from that loophole.

You see, under the current law, a meth cooker could go to ten different pharmacies, buying the 30-day maximum of pseudoephedrine at each place. That would give them enough for small-scale meth manufacturing.

Law enforcement officers in Wisconsin are vigilant. They know this strategy exists, and they're doing their best to counter-act it, developing good relationships with pharmacists and tracking known meth manufacturers.

Unfortunately, their best efforts sometimes are not enough.

You see, because Wisconsin has a statutory exception for the purchase of pseudoephedrine from pharmacies and pharmacists, when criminals are caught buying from multiple drug stores and exceeding state limits, D-As have difficulty pressing felony charges.

My bill, AB 203, addresses this problem. It closes the loophole that allows some meth makers to get their hands on the ingredients they need to cook more of the drug.

Law enforcement officials are asking for this change, and I am proud to partner with them.

It's a simple bill, but it will make an impact.

- -It will take dangerous drug makers and dealers off our streets.
- -It will help keep our constituents our neighbors and friends safe.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support A-B 203, and to act quickly.

Thank you.

If you have any questions, I'm happy to take them at this time. Otherwise, I hope you'll welcome my guests to testify, as well.